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WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Leading media (banners in Yediot, Maariv, and Jerusalem Post) reported on PM Sharon's speech before hundreds of Jewish leaders at the Baruch College in Manhattan Sunday. The media quoted Sharon as saying that the disengagement move will take place as scheduled, and nothing, including Palestinian fire, will stop it. (On Sunday, Maariv had led with statements by senior IDF officers that the move would be postponed by six months, because the set date for disengagement, plays into the hands of the Palestinians.) The media noted the warm welcome the leaders gave to Sharon. However, he was heckled by protesters, hundreds of whom -- including many ultra-Orthodox -- also demonstrated outside the hall.

Leading media reported that anti-American Muslim protesters heckled First Lady Laura Bush as she visited the Temple Mount on Sunday, while dozens of Jewish demonstrators called for the release of imprisoned spy Jonathan Pollard during her visit to the Temple Mount. The media reported on the conviviality of the First Lady's visits to the Western (Wailing) Wall, the President's Residence, and Yad Vashem. In today's Maariv, Labor Party Knesset Member and former minister Yuli Tamir accuses the organizers of Mrs. Bush's visit in Israel of having arranged meetings for her only with the wives of senior Israeli officials, and not with women active in peace or social reform groups.

On Sunday, Ha'aretz reported that the U.S. administration is divided on what sort of gesture to make to PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas during his visit to the White House. Today, Israel Radio reported that the PA has asked the pro-Israel lobby AIPAC not to thwart in Congress the promised direct U.S. aid to the Palestinians, amounting to USD 200 million. Ha'aretz reported that the U.S. administration does not intend to circumvent Congressional restrictions during Abbas's upcoming visit to Washington.

Israel Radio reported that PA Minister of Civilian Affairs Muhammad Dahlan told Vice PM Ehud Olmert and FM Silvan Shalom Sunday at the at the World Economic Forum (WEF) at the Dead Sea, Jordan (WEF), that the Palestinians will not fire at Israel from the Gaza Strip after the Israeli withdrawal. The radio cited Olmert's promise that Israel would remove roadblocks and take economic steps to improve the situation of the population in the Gaza Strip, while Shalom reportedly said the Palestinians had to stop the violence first, before receiving concessions. Ha'aretz quoted Olmert as saying at the meeting that Israel is willing to gradually give up control of the Rafah crossing between Egypt and the Gaza Strip, eventually handing the area over to Egypt a few months after completion of the disengagement plan.

On Sunday, Israel Radio quoted U.S. Senator Gordon Smith (R-OR) as saying at the WEF that the U.S. will not risk its prestige in order to establish a Palestinian state. He said that the U.S. is committed first and foremost to Israel's security, and the establishment of a Palestinian state is not a top priority for the administration. Smith added that the leaders of Arab states would be better off dealing with

policy problems in their own countries before they worry about the Palestinians.

Leading media reported that Infrastructure Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer met with Iraqi FM Hoshair Zebari at the WEF. Jerusalem Post cited the Tourism Ministry as saying that Tourism Minister Avraham Hirschson met with UAE Minister of Economy and Planning Lubna Al Qasimi on Sunday in Amman to discuss ways to promote tourism in the region. The newspaper also quoted Seif al-Islam Qadhafi, the son of the Libyan leader, as saying at the WEF that his country has no problem talking to Israelis.

Yediot and Israel Radio reported that on Sunday at the Hawara roadblock near Nablus, the IDF captured a 14-year-old Palestinian youth who was carrying explosives on his body. The radio also reported that a charge exploded next to an IDF jeep in Dura, west of Hebron. There were no casualties. Israel Radio reported that the army arrested a young Palestinian carrying dummy explosives in his clothes at a roadblock near Bethlehem this morning. The station quoted IDF officers as saying that this appears to be an attempt to check soldiers' alertness.

During the weekend, all media highlighted renewed exchanges of fire with Hizbullah on Saturday.

Israel Radio quoted Police Commissioner Moshe Karadi as saying that the police are not prepared for all possible developments during the disengagement process, in particular an attack on the Temple Mount or an assassination attempt against the PM.

Leading media quoted AIPAC executive director Howard Kohr as saying Sunday, as the opening of the organization's annual convention, that AIPAC would come out of the Larry Franklin affair safely, and that its employees' work for Israel both in Congress and the administration had not been harmed. Yediot reported that the Foreign Ministry has decided that Israeli embassies around the world will no longer issue passports, due to the increase in forgeries.

Mideast:

Summary:

Liberal op-ed writer Ofer Shelach opined in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Unilateralism is an overtly Israeli aspiration.... [But] despite everything, we are not alone."

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Our advice to the American Jewish Right and its Christian allies is: accept the changed realities. Rather than opposing disengagement, strengthen the government's hand in securing ... the ... 'consensus' settlements."

Senior op-ed writer Akiya Eldar wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Those who have longed for independence for years cannot give it up when it is laid at their doorstep because of a dubious bowl of lentils."

Terrorism expert Dr. Boaz Ganor wrote in Yediot Aharonot: "Even if different departments ... of ... [Hamas] engage in activities of welfare, charity, religion, education or legitimate political activity -- this does not legitimize an organization that engages in terrorism."

Arab affairs commentator Danny Rubinstein wrote in Ha'aretz: "The Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, whose political continuation is not clear to anyone, may yet turn out to be a step that ... is a symbol of exhibitions of hostility and hatred, of which the fate of the settlers' homes is an example."

Block Quotes:

I. "We Are Not Alone"

Liberal op-ed writer Ofer Shelach opined in the lead editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (May 22): "One cannot separate all the firing this past week, both in the Gaza Strip and along the northern border, from the preparations being made by all parties for the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza

Strip.... One thing is true, either way: the unilateral nature of the withdrawal, in which Ariel Sharon took so much pride when he sold the initiative to the public, is wind in the sails of everyone who wants to clip coupons from the withdrawal. Hamas, which is perceived by the Palestinian public as the one that expelled the Jews from the Gaza Strip with blood and fire, now wants to strengthen that impression in the weeks leading up to the evacuation. Hizbullah has taken into account that the withdrawal has created an internal divide in Israel and assumes that this will deter the IDF from responding with full force and heating up another sector.... Unilateralism is an overtly Israeli aspiration. It stems from the belief, which is shared by many in the leadership and the public, that there is no other side. The Arabs, irrespective of whether we are talking about the Palestinians or a Lebanese organization, are irrational and unreliable. To count on them is to make a mistake that will surely end in catastrophe. Therefore, we need to do, without an agreement, what is right for us and to impose a new reality on the entire region. Sometimes, that line of thinking leads to courageous and correct steps. Other times, the other side insists on demonstrating its rationale and reminds us that, despite everything, we are not alone."

II. "To Israel's Supporters"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (May 23): "Spearheaded by the Zionist Organization of America, Americans for a Safe Israel and certain Orthodox leaders, the Jewish Right promised to rally against 'Sharon's deportation plan.' Disengagement, say its American opponents, is a continuation of Oslo, the result of delusional thinking by Israelis under siege. That is where the U.S. Jewish Right is most mistaken. Disengagement is not Oslo redux. The plan, though abysmally articulated by Sharon, doesn't promise a New Middle East, or even an end to hostilities. Indeed, disengagement is a reaction to post-Oslo realities.... Most Israelis across the political spectrum accept that the presence of 8,000 Jews among one million hostile Palestinians does not serve Israel's interests. Moreover, far from seeing disengagement as a defeat of the settlement enterprise, many see it as the best chance to save as much of it as possible, thereby expanding Israel's eventual permanent borders beyond the pre-1967 lines without threatening the nation's democratic character.... Our advice to the American Jewish Right and its Christian allies is: accept the changed realities. Rather than opposing disengagement, strengthen the government's hand in securing Ma'aleh Adumim, Gush Etzion and the other 'consensus' settlements.... The U.S. Jewish Right and its evangelical supporters need to stop undermining Ariel Sharon and invest their energies in holding Abbas to account and encouraging Bush to go beyond his April letter in bolstering Israel's position."

III. "Who's Afraid of Independence?"

Senior op-ed writer Akiva Eldar wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (May 23): "The disengagement plan actually pulls the rug out from under the Israeli argument that the withdrawal means an end to the occupation in the region.... It is difficult to think of a more powerful symbol of occupation than a foreign country's control over the border passages of its neighbor, whether via land, sea or air.... It is difficult to blame the Palestinians of paranoia. Quite a few Israelis really do believe that 'Gaza first' is 'Gaza last.' But those who have longed for independence for years cannot give it up when it is laid at their doorstep because of a dubious bowl of lentils. For many years, Gaza got along without an 'economic envelope,' and as for the fears that the economic separation will turn into political separation -- that will only happen if and when the independent Palestinian government turns the Gaza Strip into a terror state."

IV. "What To Do With the Elected Hamas Officials"

Terrorism expert Dr. Boaz Ganor wrote in Yediot Aharonot (May 23): "Even if different departments or activists of the organization [Hamas] engage in activities of welfare, charity, religion, education or legitimate political activity -- this does not legitimize an organization that engages in terrorism. On the basis of this principle, Israel should refuse to maintain any contact with the elected officials of Hamas until one of the following two scenarios takes place: either Hamas declares its cessation of terrorist activity, is disarmed and ceases terrorist activity in practice; or the elected official declares his disengagement from Hamas and announces himself to be an

independent elected official. Even if the declaration is no more than lip service, it will prevent the international legitimacy that could be granted the terror organization without it. If both scenarios fail to materialize, Israel should coordinate its activity with the local council solely through the agency of an appointed committee, or through a third party such as the Red Cross."

IV. "Palestinians' Mass March on Netzarim"

Arab affairs commentator Danny Rubinstein wrote in Ha'aretz (May 23): "In Gaza they are talking about the fact that tens of thousands will raid the settlements in order to destroy them, down to their foundations. In other words, they will raid the homes of the settlers not to loot them, but for the purpose of revenge.... The PA knows this, and its members are afraid that it will be impossible to prevent the attack of the masses. The entire world will then witness the pictures of destruction, and will speak of the Palestinians as uncultured vandals. That is why they prefer to have the State of Israel destroy everything.... The preparations for the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza are accompanied by an atmosphere of hostility and hatred, mutual suspicion and violence. The root of the evil is the unilateral nature of the move. The Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, whose political continuation is not clear to anyone, may yet turn out to be a step that contains no message of reconciliation and calm -- but, on the contrary, is a symbol of exhibitions of hostility and hatred, of which the fate of the settlers' homes is an example."

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